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ABSTRACT

Motivations for watching television were compared for 128 hearing and 178 hearing impaired freshman students at a technical college. The questionnaire consisted of 31 television viewing motivation items, a list of program titles for frequency and enjoyment information, attitudinal statements, and demographic items. Ss reported the amount of time they watched TV on an average daily basis. Factor analysis revealed seven motives, three of which were significantly different for hearing and hearing impaired Ss: viewing for learning and information, viewing for arousal or excitement, and viewing for companionship. Deaf Ss were more likely to view TV for the purpose of learning and information. Viewing for arousal or excitement and viewing for companionship were among the best predictors of the respondents' attachment to the medium, their amount of daily television consumption, and their perception of TV's reality in portraying life. (CL)

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MOTIVATIONS FOR TELEVISION VIEWING AMONG DEAF AND HEARING STUDENTS

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MOTIVATIONS FOR TELEVISION VIEWING AMONG DEAF AND HEARING STUDENTS

Scholarly investigations on the audiences for television have been a focal point for researchers since the medium's inception. Inquiries concerning, and comparisons among TV audience members possessing a myriad of demographic, attribute, psychological and other qualities have described and theorized about the commonalities and differences between such aggregates (Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, & Roberts, 1978). Yet perhaps somewhat surprisingly, mass media researchers have largely neglected the deaf[1] audience for television even though the deaf view more TV than hearing persons. Austin's (1980a) review of the empirical literature published from 1950 to 1978 on television and the deaf concluded that information about this audience was "scant at best." The study reported here offers the results of an investigation which compared deaf and hearing persons' motivations for televiewing. The research question which guided the present study was: are there differences between deaf and hearing individuals' reasons for watching television?

Although this study's research question has not previously been subjected to empirical investigation, previous research offers several reasons which suggest that deaf persons' motives for televiewing would differ from those of the hearing. For instance, just as Braverman and Cronin (n.d.) have noted that "deaf viewers bring a unique set of learning strategies to the viewing situation," so too might their reasons for viewing differ. Or, extrapolating from research which has found significantly higher televiewing levels among the deaf than the hearing (see, e.g., Austin & Myers, 1983; Sendelbaugh, 1977; Sternberg, 1963), it is possible to speculate that the motivations for viewing and the gratifications derived from viewing may interactively function to explain such viewing level differences. Thirdly, Austin and Myers' (1983) recent study found that deaf persons reported significantly greater attachment to, or affinity toward, the medium than did hearing

persons and that TV was perceived by the deaf as significantly more real than by hearing respondents. These differences, too, may be a function of -- or function as -- differential reasons for viewing between the two aggregates. Lastly, variation in televiewing motivations might be thought to differ since the deaf are more visually dependent than the hearing.

Theoretically, the context for the present study is the uses and gratifications perspective. Although research on the reasons why people use various mass media has a long history, at the same time, the uses and gratifications approach, both quantitatively and qualitatively, has been the "weak sibling" to the effects -- particularly short-term effects -- perspective. One of the key components in the uses and gratifications approach concerns the audience "as active, that is, an important part of mass media use is assumed to be goal directed" (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974, p. 21). Thus, this approach conceptualizes the audience as selectively seeking both a specific medium and its content based upon personal needs and goals (in contrast with other conceptualizations viewing the audience as passive and holding a casual, or almost fortuitous, relationship with the media).

METHOD

Sample The sample for this study was comprised of entering freshman students at a technical college located in the northeast. These students were attending pre-classes freshman orientation held during July, 1982. A total of 383 hearing students attended the freshman orientation. Questionnaires were distributed to 128 (or 33.4% of the total number of) hearing students and to 178 (or 56.9% of the total - 313 - number of) hearing-impaired students. Thus the sample totals 306 respondents, 42% hearing and 58% hearing-impaired.

For the sample as a whole, 38% were female and 62% were male; these percentages parallel the composition of the college's population. Among just the hearing students 68% were male; among just the hearing-impaired students 58% were male.

There was no significant difference between deaf and hearing students by sex ($X^2 = 2.946$, df = 1, p = .086). The age range for the entire sample was from 16 to 40 years ($\bar{X}$ = 18.85, Md = 18.35). Among the hearing students the age range was 16 to 24 years ($\bar{X}$ = 18.07); among the hearing-impaired students the age range was 16 to 40 years ($\bar{X}$ = 19.43). Results of a t-test showed that the hearing-impaired were significantly older than the hearing students (t = 4.87, df = 299, $p < .001$). Ninety-four percent of the entire sample was white, 3% was black, 2% hispanic, and 1% oriental.

Instrument The questionnaire consisted of 31 television viewing motivation items, a list of TV program titles with response options to measure the respondents' frequency of viewing each, a list of TV program titles with response options to measure the respondents' enjoyment of each, attitudinal statements, and demographic items. The respondents' level of television exposure was determined by having them report the number of hours and minutes they watch TV "on an average daily basis."

The 31 viewing motivations or television "uses" statements were drawn from research by Greenberg (1974) and Rubin (1979; 1981). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the televiewing reasons on a five-point scale: "exactly" (coded as 5), "a lot" (4), "somewhat" (3), "not much" (2), and "not at all like my reason" (1) for watching television.

To ascertain the respondents' frequency of viewing and their enjoyment of various television programs two separate but identical lists of program titles were constructed. TV Guide was consulted and program titles listed in the local edition were compiled over a four week period prior to distributing the questionnaire. This resulted in a list of 45 regularly scheduled prime time commercial network programs (i.e., no specials or movies, only series, were included). Of the 45 programs, CBS and ABC accounted for 17 shows each and NBC the remaining

11 programs. To enable more accurate and directly comparable future comparisons concerning viewing and enjoyment of program categories,[2] each of the 45 programs was coded by category following the procedures specified by Austin (1979a, 1979b, 1980b, 1982, 1983) in his content analyses. The category or "type" of each program was coded according to TV Guide's content sidebar (e.g., Alice - Comedy). This method offers the advantage of standardization of program categories. Using this procedure five program categories resulted from the list of 45 programs: Comedy (20 programs), Drama (12 programs), Crime-Drama (7 programs), News Magazine (3 programs), and Miscellaneous (3 programs: Real People, That's Incredible, and Walt Disney). The program categorization employed here tends to largely remove the difficulty of making comparisons between program-types by viewing or enjoyment over time since it offers a uniform program coding procedure. This method obviates the concern over the possible lack of shared meaning of a preconstructed program label both between respondents and between respondents and researchers since categories are constructed post hoc. A caveat to this statement, though, is that the efficacy of TV Guide's program coding is dependent upon TV Guide's own coding reliability.

The respondents were first asked to indicate how often they watched each of the 45 shows which were presented in alphabetical order. A five-point response option, identical to that used by Roloff and Greenberg (1980), for each show was provided: "not at all," "not very often," "some of the time it's on," "most of the time it's on," and "every time it's on." Responses were coded so that a 1 indicated infrequent and a 5 indicated frequent viewing of each program. The respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which they enjoyed each of the 45 programs. A separate (from the first set) alphabetical listing of the 45 programs was presented and a five-point response option, ranging from "very unenjoyable" to "very enjoyable," was provided for each program. Responses were coded so that a 1 indicated the least favorable and a 5 indicated the most favorable level of enjoyment.

Rubin's (1981) two separate five-item indices of attitudes toward the television medium and its content were presented in the questionnaire. The "attachment index" measured respondents' attraction to TV by their responses to the following: "I would rather watch TV than do anything else", "I could easily do without television for several days", "I would feel lost without television to watch", "If the TV wasn't working, I would not miss it", and "Watching TV is one of the most important things I do each day." The "reality index" measured respondents' perception to how true to life TV was felt to be according to their reponses to the following: "Television presents things the way they really are in life", "If I see something on TV, I can't be sure it really is that way", "Television lets me really see how other people live", "TV does not show life as it really is", and "Television lets me see what happens in other places as if I were really there." A five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (coded as 1) to "strongly agree" (coded as 5) was presented for each of the ten statements.

Procedures Data analysis was performed using SPSS (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975). The televiewing motivation statements were subjected to factor analysis with principal factors using R^2 communality estimates with iterations and with an orthogonal (varimax) rotation. The following criteria were applied for the selection of factors: a minimum eigenvalue loading of 1.0 or greater, followed by a two-items-on-a-factor test utilizing a minimum loading criterion of .30. Following factor analysis, weighted scale scores for each factor were constructed using the factor loadings for each variable in the factor. These weighted factor scores were used in all subsequent analyses.

Reverse scored items presented in the attachment and reality indices were recoded prior to analysis for uniformity of direction. Data gathered on the attachment and reality indices, frequency of viewing by program type, and enjoyment of program type viewing were summed to form separate scales.

To test for differences between deaf and hearing respondents' motives for television viewing, two-tailed t-tests were used. Multiple linear regression analysis, using the stepwise procedure, was used to measure how predictive the viewing motivations were of television viewing levels, attachment to the medium, and perceived realism of television.

In order to determine the key variables differentiating deaf and hearing respondents and the televiewing cognitions and behaviors measured in this study, the data were subjected to discriminant analysis. The discriminant analysis was performed using the stepwise procedure with a varimax rotation of the discriminant function. The stepwise selection method selects independent variables for inclusion in the analysis on the basis of their discriminating power, resulting in an optimal set of variables being selected. The criterion for selection of variables employed here was Rao's V by which "the variable selected is the one which contributes the largest increase in V when added to the previous variables" (see Nie et al., 1975, pp. 447-448). Results of the initial discriminant analysis revealed that of the 22 variables entered (all factors, frequency of daily televiewing, five program-type frequency of viewing measures, five program-type enjoyment measures, and the reality and attachment indices), ten met the necessary criteria for entry into the equation. These ten variables were then extracted and entered into a second discriminant analysis. The justification for using inferential statistics with a non-probability sample may be found in Winch and Campbell (1969).

RESULTS

A seven factor solution resulted from the factor analysis performed on the 31 television viewing motivation statements. Together the seven factors accounted for 63.1% of the total variance. Table 1 presents the factors, individual items

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Table 1 About Here

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and their loadings, eigenvalues for each factor and the percent of variance accounted for by each factor. These seven factors by and large replicate the structure found in previous research (Greenberg, 1974; Rubin, 1981) indicating that the present sample's motives for televiewing include viewing for specific program content, for learning and gaining information, for arousal, for companionship, for relaxation, to pass time, and to escape.

Examination of the weighted factor means showedthat on every factor the deaf respondents' score was higher than the hearing respondents'. Thus, in all seven instances the deaf indicated greater salience for each motive than the hearing. Results of the t-tests performed on each factor between deaf and hearing respondents found significant differences between groups on three factors. The deaf were significantly more likely than the hearing to report TV viewing for Learning and Information ($t = 4.67$, $df = 299$, $p < .001$), for Arousal/Excitement ($t = 6.59$, $df = 299$, $p < .001$), and for Companionship ($t = 4.46$, $df = 298$, $p < .001$).

Table 2 summarizes the results of the three regression analyses. As reported

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Table 2 About Here

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in this table, the two attitudinal components as well as frequency of daily television viewing were all significantly explained by the seven viewing motivation factors. Frequency of viewing was predicted by companionship, arousal/excitement, relaxation, and pass time/habit. Affinity toward television was predicted by arousal/excitement, companionship, and escape/to forget. Perceived realism of TV was explained by arousal/excitement, learning and information, and companionship.

Examination of Table 2 across viewing motives suggests that viewing for arousal/excitement and for companionship are positive functions for viewing level, attachment, and realism. Conversely, televiewing for specific program content did not augment viewing level, affinity, or realism. Televiewing for learning and information as well as for escape motives tended to decrease viewing level but

augmented attachment toward the medium as well as its perceived realism. Watching TV to pass time heightened affinity and increased viewing level but decreased perceived realism of TV's portrayal of life. Viewing for relaxation, while contributing to amount of TV viewed, decreased both importance of the medium and perceived realism.

The discriminant analysis performed on the ten variables which were extracted from the preliminary analysis resulted in nine of the ten meeting the equation entry criteria (enjoyment of crime drama programs failed to meet the F and tolerance levels for stepwise selection). Table 3 presents the standardized discriminant coefficients and related summary statistics for the routine. The

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Table 3 About Here

Wilks' lambda of .60 indicates that discrimination between deaf and hearing based on these nine variables was good; further, the discriminant analysis was able to correctly classify 83.2% of the deaf and 77.9% of the hearing respondents based on these nine variables. The group centroids suggest a high degree of separation and a negative relationship between the two groups, as would be expected; the nine variables accounted for 68% of the variance. Among the nine variables, three viewing motivations (arousal/excitement, specific program content, and companionship) were the best predictors in separating the groups.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether deaf and hearing persons differed in their motives for television viewing. Through factor analysis, seven televiewing motives were identified on three of which significant differences between deaf and hearing respondents were found. The deaf were more likely than the hearing to view television for the purpose of learning and information. Four of the five items which loaded solely on this factor suggest that the kind of

information acquisition being sought was of a surveillance nature: learning about events occurring in the world, learning new behaviors, discovering ramifications of behaviors, and gaining insight to oneself. Future research might be directed at analysis of this television viewing motive as it relates to Braverman and Cronin's (n.d.) assertion that the learning strategies the deaf bring with them to the television viewing situation differ from the hearing. Such an approach has clear educational implications at a variety of levels; e.g., educational in the sense of formal schooling as well as educational in the sense of less formal social initiation.

The two other viewing motives on which the deaf and hearing were found to differ were viewing for arousal or excitement and viewing for companionship. Results of the discriminant analysis suggest that these two motivations were important variables in distinguishing the deaf and hearing in terms of their interaction with television. Moreover, results of the multiple regression analyses indicated that these same two motives were among the best predictors of the respondents' attachment to the medium, their amount of daily television consumption, and how realistic they perceived TV's portrayal of life to be. This finding offers tentative explanatory information concerning why the deaf view more TV than the hearing; i.e., differences between deaf and hearing's motives for and gratifications derived from televiewing explains the differential levels of TV consumption, affinity, and attributed realism.

As with most studies, the present research was conducted with several limitations. The method of sample selection was not random due to the time available to the respondents in relation to other activities they were engaged in as a part of their orientation program. The composition of the sample with regard to sex and age limits the population validity of the findings. Nevertheless, the present study found highly significant differences in viewing motivations between deaf and hearing which, although certainly not conclusive, are suggestive and heuristic. Given

the limitations of the present sample, as well as the specific sample of television programs, it may be best to characterize the present findings as preliminary. This conservative approach is underscored by the kinds of multivariate statistical analyses employed in the present report; despite the fact that these statistical tools are robust, the present results must be interpreted as exploratory. Still, the significance levels reported here are provocative and of sufficient strength to warrant replication and expansion of the present study. The data reported here offer support for the uses and gratifications perspective and suggest an explanatory framework within which the deaf and their interaction with television can be better understood.

FOOTNOTES

[1]While there are differences between individuals classified as "hearing-impaired" and "deaf," for purposes of stylistic simplicity this article will use the terms interchangeably.

[2]For a discussion of the methodological problems concerning alternative strategies for the labeling and interpretation of program categories among both respondents and researchers, see Austin & Myers (1983).

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TABLE 1

Factorial Solution for TV Viewing Motivations

Items	Loading
Factor I: Specific Program Content	
*When there's something on I want to see	.80
*Because I like to watch certain shows	.69
Because it entertains me	.65
*When I want to watch my favorite show	.62
Because it's enjoyable	.50
Because it's a pleasant rest	.43
When I have nothing better to do	.43
Because it amuses me	.43
Because it passes time away, particularly when I'm bored	.42
Because I just like to watch	.32
Eigenvalue = 10.346	
Percent of variance = 33.4%	
Factor II: Learning & Information	
*Because it helps me to learn things about myself and others	.73
*So I could learn about what could happen to me	.73
*So I can learn how to do things which I haven't done before	.62
*So I can learn about things happening in the world	.56
Because it's exciting	.36
So I can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching	.36
So I can get away from the rest of the family or others	.32
Because it's enjoyable	.32
*Because it's something to do when friends come over	.32
So I can get away from what I'm doing	.30
Because it peps me up	.30
Eigenvalue = 2.495	
Percent of variance = 8.0%	
Factor III: Arousal/Excitement	
Because it's exciting	.59
*Because it's thrilling	.62
Because I just like to watch	.52
Because it's enjoyable	.51
Because it relaxes me	.39
Because it peps me up	.39
Because it's a pleasant rest	.38
So I can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching	.32
Eigenvalue = 1.991	
Percent of variance = 6.4%	

Factor IV: Companionship

*Because it makes me feel less lonely	.70
*So I won't have to be alone	.63
*When there's no one else to talk to or be with	.58
Because it passes time away, particularly when I'm bored	.51
When I have nothing better to do	.41
Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time	.33

Eigenvalue = 1.388
Percent of varience = 4.5%

Factor V: Relaxation

*To release tension	.56
*Because it allows me to unwind	.53
Because it amuses me	.52
Because it relaxes me	.45
Because it entertains me	.39
So I can forget about school and homework	.31

Eigenvalue = 1.213
Percent of variance = 3.9%

Factor VI: Pass Time/Habit

*Just because it's there	.63
Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time	.51
*Because it's a habit, just something to do	.41
Because I just like to watch	.41
When I have nothing better to do	.37
Because it passes time away, particularly when I'm bored	.31

Eigenvalue = 1.080
Percent of variance = 3.5%

Factor VII: Escape/To Forget

So I can get away from what I'm doing	.62
So I can forget about school and homework	.40
So I can get away from the rest of the family or others	.34

Eigenvalue = 1.043
Percent of variance = 3.4%

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*items load purely on the factor indicated.

TABLE 2

Multiple Regression Analysis of Viewing Motivations as Predictors of Television Viewing Level, Affinity, and Realism

Viewing Motivations	Viewing Level		Television Affinity		Television Realism	
	b	F	b	F	b	F
Specific Program Content	-.07	11.03	-.46	41.39	-.28	28.77
Learning & Information	-.03	9.21	.11	63.19	.23	65.20
Arousal/Excitement	.17	25.30	.39	36.54	.39	34.92
Companionship	.20	40.63	.35	46.86	.20	23.59
Relaxation	.12	17.69	-.05	22.71	-.12	19.37
Pass Time/Habit	.11	13.68	.10	26.41	-.08	14.17
Escape/To Forget	-.02	7.89	.15	31.18	.08	16.38
*p < .005	F = 7.89*		F = 22.71**		F = 14.17**	
** p < .001	df = 7/279		df = 7/282		df = 7/281	
	R_2 = .41		R_2 = ..60		R_2 = .51	
	R^2 = .165		R^2 = .360		R^2 = .261	

TABLE 3

Standardized Discriminant Function Coefficients

Variable	Function 1
Specific Program Content	-.74
Learning & Information	-.22
Arousal/Excitement	.92
Companionship	.62
Pass Time/Habit	-.25
Reality Index	.33
Frequency of Viewing Crime Drama Programs	-.42
Frequency of Viewing Drama Programs	.50
Enjoyment of News Magazine Programs	-.40
eigenvalue	.68
canonical correlation	.64
χ^2	118.53
df	9
probability less than	.0001
Wilks' Lambda	.60
percent of cases correctly classified	80.97%
group centroids	
deaf	.67
hearing	-.99